

**Sunset Advisory Commission
Board and Commission Review**

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years.

Vermont Farm Viability Program

The Farm Viability Board meets at a minimum twice per year.

FY 17 – December 14, 2016 and June 26, 2017

FY 18 – November 14, 2017 and April 13, 2018

2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.
3. Members are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture in calculation with the Executive Director of VHCB.

Advisory Board

Alyson Eastman, Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Chair

Bob Baird, Baird Farm - Secretary

Abbie Corse, The Corse Farm Dairy - Secretary

Joan Goldstein, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Economic Development

Colleen Goodridge, Goodridge Lumber - Secretary

Adam Grinold, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation – Secretary

Sarah Isham, VT Agricultural Credit Corporation/VT Economic Development Authority

Pete Johnson, Pete's Greens - Secretary

Chuck Ross, University of Vermont Extension

Gus Seelig, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

4. Provide an overview of the board or commission's purpose.

The Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program is a voluntary program established in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide assistance to Vermont farm, food, and

forest-sector businesses to enhance the financial success and long-term viability of Vermont agricultural and forest sectors.

5. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

The purpose of this board is still needed in Vermont. The viability program is doing specific work of business development in agriculture and forestry that is not available in state government.

6. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?

The board is doing excellent work as evident through the Farm Viability's expansion into forestry and the impact that this work has had in this sector. The forestry related businesses have benefited from increased information on financial management and business planning. Agricultural businesses continue to benefit from the financial and business planning provided but also are benefitting from the grants funding that has been secured and managed by the program to assist with dairy farm improvement and water quality.

7. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?

The purpose is still needed and there is not another entity in state government that could provide the same assistance.

8. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?

There is some overlap on grants with the Working Lands program and the Water Quality program for Best Management Practices (BMP). Farm viability works closely with the Agency of Agriculture to not provide duplicative grants and to enhance water quality grants where possible.

9. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?

The enabling statute still reflects the purpose and activities of the board.

10. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?

The Agency of Agriculture does not provide funding to this board. VHCB provides staffing but no funding is provided.

11. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?

The Farm Viability Program is required to provide a report once per year to the Senate Committees on Agriculture and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry and on Commerce and Economic Development on or before January 31 of each year. Reports have been provided on this schedule.